




**POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

CITY OF VANCOUVER WASHINGTON	INDEX			
	Administrative/Council/City Manager			
Subject	Number 100-34	Rev. D	Effective Date 2/24/25	Page 1 of 5
City Council Relations with City Staff	Supersedes 12/13/21	<small>DocuSigned by:</small> Prepared by: 		<small>DocuSigned by:</small> Approved by: <i>Anne McInerney-Ogle</i>

**1.0 Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to establish formal procedures for interaction between City Council and City staff.

**2.0 Organizations Affected**

City Council/City Manager

**3.0 References**

- City Council Resolution M-3256, November 11, 1999
- City Council Resolution, M-3730, January 3, 2011
- City Council Resolution, M-4157, December 13, 2021
- City Council Resolution, M-4329, February 24, 2025

**4.0 Respect**

There will be mutual respect from both City staff and Councilmembers of their respective roles and responsibilities when, and if, expressing criticism in a public meeting. When feasible, questions should be asked of staff before the public meetings.

**5.0 Roles**

City staff will acknowledge the Council as policy makers, and the Councilmembers will acknowledge City staff as administering the Council's policies.

**6.0 Requested Written Material**

When written materials relating to policy issues are requested of staff by individual Councilmembers, staff will contact the other Councilmembers via e-mail to inquire if they would also like a copy of the materials.

**7.0 Personnel Selection and Awarding of Contracts**

Councilmembers shall not attempt to coerce or influence City staff in the selection of personnel, the awarding of contracts, the selection of consultants, the processing of development applications or the granting of City licenses or permits (Section 3.04 of the Vancouver City Charter)

**8.0 City Department Non-Interference**

Council should not attempt to change or interfere with the operating rules and practices of any City department.

**9.0 Mail Delivery**

Mail that is addressed to the Mayor and Councilmembers should be date stamped, copied and circulated, including the envelope, by the City Manager as soon as practical after it arrives. Email will be managed in accordance with the Council Email Policy 100-37.

**10.0 Confidential Mail**

The City Manager and their staff should not open mail addressed to individual Councilmembers if it is marked personal and/or confidential.

**11.0 Individual Councilmember Directed Actions**

No Councilmember should direct the city Manager to initiate any action or prepare any report that is significant in nature, or initiate any project or study without the consent of a majority of the Council.

**12.0 Councilmember Requests for Information**

Individual requests for information can be made directly to the manager of the service in question, unless otherwise determined by the City Manager. If the request would create a change in work assignments or City staffing levels, the request must be made through the City Manager.

**13.0 Councilmember Staff Support for Boards and Commissions**

The City Manager will provide an acceptable level of staff support for Councilmembers in their appointed roles on boards and commissions.

## **14.0 Staff Assistance for Councilmembers**

Councilmembers needing staff assistance should work through the assistant to the City Manager.

## **15.0 Allegations of Misconduct**

The City will evaluate all allegations of misconduct and performance feedback against the Investigation Standard set forth within this policy; conduct investigations and inquiries as needed to resolve factual disputes; render findings; take employment actions; and document the decision-making process as outlined within this policy.

### **15.1 Applicability**

This policy applies to allegations against the City Manager and those persons who report directly to the City Manager; the City Attorney and Assistant City Attorneys; Department Heads as that term is used in the City Charter and in ordinances which establish the various departments; and non-elected members of appointive city boards, city commissions and city committees. Allegations against all other City employees shall be conducted consistent with the City's collective bargaining agreements and personnel policies. Allegations against elective officers (members of the City Council) shall be resolved in accordance with the City Council Code of Conduct and Ethics, Policy 100-36.

### **15.2 Investigation Standard**

The City of Vancouver will promptly investigate all plausible allegations that, if true, would constitute a violation of law or City policy by an individual to whom this policy applies.

### **15.3 Process**

The City of Vancouver will use the following process to review complaints and performance feedback and evaluate whether the Investigative Standard has been met.

**A. Online Portal:** The City will maintain an online portal through which individuals may submit complaints or performance feedback concerning one or more of the public officials identified in Section 15.1. The City's online portal will, at a minimum, allow the party submitting the complaint or feedback to select from the following parties to whom their submission may be directed:

1. The City Manager;
2. The City Attorney;

3. The City Audit Committee (comprised of the Mayor, Mayor Pro Tempore, City Manager, City Attorney, Chief Financial Officer, and Internal Auditor); and/or
4. The City Council.

**B. Submission in Writing.** Complaints and performance feedback may be submitted electronically or in writing. The City will provide reasonable accommodations to individuals who need assistance to submit a written complaint or performance feedback. Written acknowledgement of receipt shall be provided for all complaints and performance feedback received by the City except in the event of an anonymous complaint. Anonymous complaints will be accepted and reviewed by the City, however, unless practicable, anonymous complaints will not be acknowledged in writing, nor will follow-up be conducted on any matters requiring clarification.

**C. Internal Routing.** Complaints or performance feedback received by the City that relate to one or more of the public officials identified in Section 15.1 will be promptly marked as “Confidential” and routed internally as necessary to accommodate review as follows:

1. The City Manager shall review, or cause to be reviewed, all complaints and performance feedback about individuals who report directly to the City Manager, the City Attorney, Department heads, and members of appointive city boards, commissions, and committees.
2. The City Attorney shall review all complaints and performance feedback submitted regarding the City Manager or Assistant City Attorneys.
3. The City Audit Committee shall review all complaints and performance feedback: (1) that relate to both the City Manager and City Attorney, or (2) involve misuse or misappropriation of City assets or resources; PROVIDED that any member(s) of the Audit Committee implicated in the complaint shall recuse themselves from conducting the review.
4. The Vancouver City Council shall be informed of any review conducted pursuant to subsections 15.3(C) above within 30 days of receipt of a submission. At a minimum, notice to the City Council shall include (a) the identity of submitting party (if known), (b) the identity of the subject(s) of the complaint or performance feedback, (c) a concise description of the nature of the allegations or performance feedback, and (d) the status of the review that has been undertaken to determine whether the submission meets the Investigative Standard set forth in Section 15.2.

**D. Decision Making Authority.** Any complaint that meets the Investigative Standard set forth above shall be referred to the following decision-making authority to establish the scope of investigation, inquiry, and any interim protective measures.

1. The City Council shall serve as decision-making authority for any allegations meeting the Investigative Standard asserted against the City Manager.
2. The City Manager, or their designee, shall serve as decision-making authority for any allegations meeting the Investigative Standard asserted against any other individual(s) to whom this policy applies.

**E. Scope of Investigation, Inquiry and Interim Protective Measures.** Upon receipt of a complaint that has been determined to meet the Investigative Standard, the decision-making authority shall determine (1) the appropriate scope of inquiry to decide whether the allegation is actually true, (2) the manner and method of conducting any investigation or inquiry into the truth of the allegation, and (3) any interim steps that should be taken to protect the City, its employees, assets, or interests while the investigation or inquiry is being conducted.

**F. Notice, and Opportunity to be Heard.** Once the appropriate scope and method of investigation or inquiry has been established by the decision-maker, and any interim protective measures have been implemented, the individual(s) about whom the allegations have been made shall be promptly given written notice and an opportunity to respond.

**G. Investigation or Inquiry.** After the subject has been notified and afforded an opportunity to respond, the decision-maker shall make, or cause to be made, such investigation or inquiry as may be necessary to resolve, on a more probable than not basis, any remaining factual questions material to the outcome of the matter under consideration.

**H. Resolution of the Complaint.** Upon conclusion of the investigation or inquiry, the subject shall be provided written notice of the decision-maker authority's findings, notice of any anticipated action that may be taken. The determination reached by the decision-making authority shall be final and binding subject to any available judicial review. Any remedial action shall be taken in accordance with law and documented in writing. The individual(s) who submitted the complaint, if known, and any other entities required by law will be notified that the matter has been resolved.